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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000841

SIPDIS

DOD FOR ISP - GRAFF, STATE FOR EUR/SE AND EUR/RPM

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TAGS: [PREL](#), [MARR](#), [GR](#), [AMB](#)

SUBJECT: GREECE: DEFENSE MINISTER ON EXPANDING COOPERATION
ON IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN

REF: ATHENS 770

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHARLES P. RIES FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

11. (C) Summary. In a March 24 meeting to discuss his proposed travel to Washington, Defense Minister Spiliotopoulos told Ambassador that Greece could provide the Iraqi military with decommissioned APCs as they are replaced over the coming years by new German models -- and perhaps other military hardware sooner. Spiliotopoulos asked for additional information concerning a NATO request that Greece provide sealift for a donation of Hungarian T-72 tanks to Iraq. He agreed to look into the possibility of SEEBRIG taking the lead on the deployment of a Role 2 Medical Facility to Kabul, particularly if SEEBRIG can move faster than Greece, and bridge to a Greece national-flag Role 2 facility later. Finally, Spiliotopoulos agreed to discuss the U.S. suggestion that Alliance members establish a policy that officers assigned to IS and NATO command positions henceforth not be subject to national caveats. End Summary.

12. (C) Greek Defense Minister Spiliotopoulos asked to see Ambassador March 24, to continue discussions of the Minister's proposed meeting in Washington with Secretary Rumsfeld (reftel). Working through an embassy-provided list of ways to improve bilateral military relations and to increase Greek contributions to NATO activities in Iraq and elsewhere, Spiliotopoulos identified a series of steps he was prepared to discuss during a proposed April 28 meeting with SecDef.

Contribution to Iraqi Military: Something Now, APCs later

13. (C) Spiliotopoulos noted that Greece was considering buying Marder Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) from Germany, but that this procurement was only at a preliminary stage. If the sale went through and once deliveries began, he said, Greece could begin sending its current stock of Russian-model BMP-1 APCs to Iraq. He cautioned that this might not begin for two years or more.

14. (C) In the meantime, he offered to review the NATO Training and Equipment Coordination Group's (NTECG) list of critical needs, to see what Greece could offer from its existing stocks of equipment. Ambassador offered to assist with coordination with NTECG, to avoid duplication of effort.

Considering Moving Hungarian Tanks

15. (C) Spiliotopoulos asked for details about a suggestion that Greece provide sealift for other Allies, contributions to Iraq. Ambassador said the most pressing need was to move 77 Hungarian T-72 tanks. Ambassador noted that our latest information is that Hungary would get the tanks to the Slovenian port of Koper but needed sealift to Iraq. After a discussion of possible transportation routes, including via Turkey or Kuwait, Ambassador agreed to seek additional information from NATO, including preferred ports of embarkation and disembarkation. Ambassador pointed out that all NATO needed was sealift -- other arrangements would be made to move the tanks to and from the ports. Spiliotopoulos, Diplomatic Advisor Bourlogiannis said it would be easier to accommodate such a request if it came from NATO, rather than bilaterally from the United States. Ambassador assured him that the request was from NATO. Spiliotopoulos commented that commercial sealift would be quicker than Greek Navy LSTs (which are slow), and emphasized that all of the tanks would need to be mobile; Greece did not have the capability to load inoperable tanks.

Medical Unit to Afghanistan: Greek or SEEBRIG?

16. (C) Spiliotopoulos noted that OSD/ISP Greece desk officer Graf raised the possibility of deploying the Role 2 Medical Facility pledged by Greece to ISAF under the SEEBRIG aegis, as a demonstration of SEEBRIG's effectiveness. He explained the Greek preference to characterize the deployment as a national contribution, for political reasons. Ambassador pointed out that SEEBRIG partners might have mobile medical equipment on hand that would allow for

deployment of the unit faster, citing reports that Greece would need to equip a team, a process that might take many months. If this was the case, he asked, and if SEEBRIG could deploy faster, would it be possible for some Greeks to go first to Kabul as a part of a SEEBRIG unit and, possibly, assume the lead later? Spiliotopoulos agreed to consider the idea.

NATO Policy Against Future Caveats: Worth Considering

17. (C) Ambassador reminded Spiliotopoulos of the U.S. suggestion made at the NATO Informal Defense Ministerial in Nice to move past Alliance disagreements over Iraq and adopt an Alliance policy against future national caveats on officers assigned to NATO IS and command positions. Spilitopoulos said such a policy would seem logical, and agreed to discuss it with the Foreign Minister and others in the Greek government. Diplomatic Advisor Bourlogiannis said Greece was unlikely to be able to influence others in the group of five countries with these caveats. Ambassador replied that, if one of these countries supported such a policy, it would make it easier for others to follow suit.
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